

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

April 1, 2002
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Marshall, Deputy Mayor Degginger, Councilmembers Creighton, Davidson, Mosher, and Noble¹

ABSENT: Councilmember Lee

1. Executive Session

Deputy Mayor Degginger opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. and announced recess to executive session for approximately one hour to discuss one item of property acquisition, one item of potential litigation, and one personnel item.

At 6:50 p.m., the meeting resumed with Mayor Marshall presiding. Mrs. Marshall welcomed students of an American Government class from Northwest College in Kirkland.

2. Study Session

(a) 2003-2004 Budget Policy Discussion

City Manager Steve Sarkozy explained for the public that the budget is the City's most important policy document. Council has requested a more expanded role early in the budget process and budget binders have been distributed to Councilmembers. Staff will provide relevant written materials at least one week prior to the scheduled discussion of items in the coming months.

Mr. Sarkozy proposed a set of ground rules to guide Council's budget discussions. Staff will maintain an ongoing record of Council's decisions throughout the process and update the binders as needed. Staff presentations will be limited to approximately one-third of Council's meeting time to allow adequate time for Council discussion. Responses to Council inquiries will be provided in writing. Staff will maintain a list of "memory bank" items including items requiring more information or analysis before Council discussion, items raised in advance of when that topic is scheduled in the budget process, and items without sufficient support to bring to closure at that time.

¹ Mr. Noble arrived at 6:05 p.m.

Mr. Sarkozy noted Tab 2 of the budget binders, which includes the proposed budget process calendar. Council decisions will be filed under Tab 3. Tab 4 provides materials on Council policies and its vision for the community. He noted page 4-4, a revised draft of the City Council Vision dated April 2001. A suggested preamble, written by Deputy Mayor Degginger, appears on page 4-3. Mr. Sarkozy said a clear vision is important for providing a framework to guide the budget process.

Mayor Marshall recommended a review of various mission and vision oriented documents to ensure consistency in language and intent. She noted the use of different verb tenses in the Council vision document. Councilmembers concurred with the need to review and revise the documents.

Mr. Noble suggested that Council identify and prioritize major topics to be covered in the vision and the budget process. Mayor Marshall feels water is a top priority in order to support anticipated growth in King County. She suggested language addressing the need for adequate infrastructure to support Bellevue's population. Dr. Davidson added multi-modal transportation as a key infrastructure component. Mr. Mosher noted the elements of a safe city including police, fire, and emergency planning services.

Mr. Creighton suggested the creation of a Council subcommittee to review the documents. Mayor Marshall asked Councilmembers to submit specific comments to her and she will organize the committee.

Continuing, Mr. Sarkozy noted page 4-7, a list of Council's established priorities and audacious goals, followed by Council's work plan. He recommended proceeding with a discussion of Council's priorities, audacious goals, the structure of the budget, and other broad issues.

Deputy Mayor Degginger suggested two items for Council's list of priorities: 1) the City's role in economic development, and 2) water supply. He noted the need to redevelop neighborhood shopping centers.

Dr. Davidson is reluctant to discuss ways to spend money without knowing what resources will be available. He suggested limiting growth in the number of City employees and avoiding any tax increases. He would like more discussion on the potential to reduce utility taxes.

Mr. Mosher said a key element of the next budget will be facility needs. He feels the last budget did a good job of focusing on employees. He supports an emphasis on neighborhoods, including the downtown, and noted that concentrating new development in the downtown is one strategy for protecting existing residential neighborhoods. He suggested a shift toward packaging services more comprehensively for neighborhoods.

Mr. Noble is interested in exploring opportunities to streamline and simplify transportation project programming and budgeting. He is interested in methods to improve the efficiency of moving traffic through Bellevue. Mr. Noble encouraged comprehensive technology planning and implementation to enhance overall government efficiency. He favors a continued emphasis on supporting human services in the community. He noted efforts by other cities to attract

business and feels it is important to continue to focus on maintaining Bellevue's economic vitality. In terms of public safety, Mr. Noble feels there is a need for an increased emphasis on traffic enforcement, particularly to reduce speeding and red light violations.

Mr. Creighton favors a zero-based budgeting approach and cautioned against increased spending every year. He would like to gain a better understanding of the policies that guide the allocation of tax revenues. Interim Finance Director Gary Ameling said this topic is scheduled for Council discussion on April 22. Mr. Creighton listed a public safety facility as a top priority for him this year. He feels parks acquisition and development needs should be decided by a public vote. Referring to technology, Mr. Creighton encouraged the City to maintain direct human contact with citizens as more processes become automated.

Dr. Davidson noted the need to control utility rates and suggested a review of the City's utilities reserve policies.

Mayor Marshall said one item she finds frustrating is the time lag between programming a project into the Capital Investment Program (CIP) budget and actual implementation. She proposed setting aside a fund that could be used to implement projects, such as ideas developed by a Citizens Advisory Committee, more quickly. She agrees with Mr. Creighton's comment about restricting continued growth of the budget.

Mrs. Marshall said some Transportation and Parks budget items are currently unspent due to project delays. She suggested temporarily limiting further programming of funds to departments experiencing delays and instead allocating increased funding to areas with immediate needs, such as the Police Department's need for an expanded facility. She would like to review the tradition of allocating a certain percentage of money to every functional area every year.

Regarding technology, Mrs. Marshall encouraged an enhanced focus on extending technology availability into neighborhoods. She receives emails daily from citizens wanting broadband access in their homes.

Mr. Mosher would like to incorporate rewards for innovation into the budget. Also, he feels the City needs to actively push for annexation of the Eastgate area.

Deputy Mayor Degginger recommended an analysis of project delays as well as options for policy changes that would enable projects to be completed more quickly.

Mr. Noble observed that complaints about the City's permit review process appear to be increasing. He would like to see increased efficiency within the permit function. He said the City of Tacoma guarantees a five-week turnaround for permits. Mr. Degginger noted this is an important element of economic vitality in terms of encouraging or discouraging development.

Mayor Marshall feels that some department functions could be centralized into a coordinated approach among all departments. Referring to Mrs. Marshall's earlier comments about project delays, Mr. Creighton noted that issues beyond staff's control such as public involvement, environmental study and mitigation, and lawsuits can potentially delay a project.

Noting the success of the West Lake Hills neighborhood investment pilot project, Mr. Noble expressed support for the continuation and enhancement of the neighborhood investment program.

Mr. Degginger asked staff to continue the City's emphasis on emergency planning and preparedness.

Mr. Mosher encouraged staff to be progressive in designating land use zoning that will facilitate changes in industry and new technologies. Dr. Davidson agreed and recommended impact zoning rather than the current permitted uses approach.

Mrs. Marshall is interested in exploring the potential acquisition of some state and county parks in and adjacent to Bellevue.

Mr. Sarkozy said the next budget discussion is scheduled for April 22 and will address revenues.

(b) Role of Boards and Commissions

Mr. Sarkozy noted that the budget process provides an opportunity to review and discuss the appropriate role of Bellevue's boards and commissions.

Myrna Basich, Assistant City Manager, provided a table listing the duties and responsibilities of each board and commission. She noted the varying levels of decision authority and involvement in the budget process for each of them.

At 7: 57 p.m., Mayor Marshall declared recess to the regular session. The study session resumed at 8:31 p.m.

Continuing, Ms. Basich recalled that Council previously expressed an interest in reviewing the overall roles and responsibilities of boards and commissions. Responding to Mayor Marshall, Ms. Basich said the boards and commissions have very little involvement in operational issues such as establishing department work plans.

Mr. Mosher recommended that the mayor and deputy mayor meet periodically with board and commission chairs.

Mr. Degginger commented on the overlap in duties for some of the boards and commissions, particularly in the area of environmental review. He wondered if it would make more sense to have one board or commission that deals with environmental reviews. Ms. Basich responded that boards and commissions periodically hold joint meetings to discuss common projects and issues.

Dr. Davidson suggested that Council liaisons to boards and commissions take a more active role in enhancing communications. Mayor Marshall said this specific issue is slated for Council discussion in a few weeks.

Mr. Noble recalled two additional issues previously discussed by Council: 1) asking a member of each board and commission to report to Council on a regular basis, and 2) elevating public awareness of the boards and commissions. From a budget perspective, Mr. Noble said he does not see any compelling reason that the duties of the boards and commissions need to be consistent. He feels it is appropriate for each to have their own mission and responsibilities.

Mayor Marshall suggested that Council's expectations regarding the advisory role of the boards and commissions be clearly communicated to them. Some members have become frustrated when recommendations have not been adopted by Council. Mr. Noble noted the value in being able to weigh staff's input along with a board or commission's recommendation in order to reach a Council decision.

Dr. Davidson proposed an approach in which Council would establish work programs for each board and commission based on identified budget priorities.

Deputy Mayor Degginger is generally satisfied with the current function of the boards and commissions and does not see the need for a major overhaul. Mayor Marshall reiterated the need to clarify the roles and expectations of the boards and commissions. Mr. Creighton feels the current responsibilities of the boards and commissions are appropriate. However, he agrees that communication can be improved.

Following additional brief discussion, Council confirmed that boards and commissions should continue to play an advisory role in budget development as articulated in the current City Code. Council decided by consensus to include a future amendment to the Code to recognize the role the Arts Commission has assumed in reviewing, prioritizing, and developing recommendations on funding requests from local arts organizations. Council agreed that the mayor and deputy mayor should meet with board and commission chairs and vice chairs in the near future to discuss overall roles, responsibilities, and protocol.

Board and commission chairs will be asked to report to Council on a quarterly basis. These reports will be scheduled for study sessions to provide adequate opportunity for dialogue between Council and the board/commission representative. There was consensus to request that board and commission chairs report their recommendations to Council at the scheduled budget public hearing on September 9.

Mayor Marshall declared the meeting adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

Myrna L. Basich
City Clerk

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